

Listing of Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1-71 (Cancelled)

72. (Previously presented) A database searching apparatus comprising:

an account management server;

a search engine in data communication with the account management server
and operative to provide search results including search listings according
to rank; and

a database searchable by the search engine and including a plurality of search
listings, at least some search listings being associated with advertisers,
the search listing associated with an advertiser including
a search term specified by the advertiser, and
a desired rank specified by the advertiser for a search listing and a
maximum cost per click (maximum CPC) and a cost per click (CPC)
associated with the desired rank for the search term and the
advertiser,

wherein, when the advertiser enters a new search listing or changes the
maximum CPC of a search listing,

the account management server is operative to adjust the CPC of the
advertiser's search listing to maintain the desired rank,

the account management server is operative to move the search listing to
the highest rank possible without exceeding the maximum CPC of
the advertiser's search listing,

the account management server is operative to maintain the CPC of the
advertiser's search listing less than or equal to the maximum CPC
of the advertiser's search listing,

the account management server is operative to set the CPC of the advertiser's search listing no higher than necessary, and the account management server is operative to avoid setting the CPC of the advertiser's search listing so that desired ranks and CPCs of other advertisers are not maintained.

73. (Previously Presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 wherein the database further stores a timestamp associated with each desired rank, the timestamp indicated time the search listing was entered or changed.

74. (Previously Presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 73 wherein the search engine is configured to:
receive a search request;
locate one or more search listings having a matching relationship with the search request; and
order search results from the one or more search listings using the CPC associated with the one or more search listings.

75. (Previously presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 further comprising:
an account manager accessible by the advertiser to vary at least one of the maximum cost per click and the desired rank for a respective bid and desired rank.

76. (Previously Presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 75 wherein the account manager is further accessible by the advertiser to vary the maximum cost per click for two or more possible ranks specified by the advertiser.

77. (Previously presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 72 further comprising:

one or more software agents configured to:
 receive advertiser bid information; and
 act on the advertiser bid information to adjust the cost per click for a
 specified search listing.

78. (Previously presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 77
wherein the one or more software agents is configured to:

 increase the current cost per click of the specified search listing if the rank of the
 specified search listing can be improved without exceeding the maximum
 cost per click; and
 decrease the current cost per click of the specified search listing without moving
 the specified search listing to a rank worse than the desired rank.

79. (Previously presented) The database searching apparatus of claim 78
wherein the one or more software agents are configured to decrease the current cost
per click of the specified search listing only if no other search listing will have its
respective current cost per click increased to decrease the rank of the specified search
listing.

80-86 (Cancelled)